



RICK SCOTT
GOVERNOR

January 4, 2012

Mr. Thomas E. Perez
Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division
United States Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

RE: Investigation of the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys and the Jackson
Juvenile Offender Center, Marianna, Florida , December 1, 2011

Dear Mr. Perez:

I received your letter dated December 1, 2011, transmitting your office's report of its review of the North Florida Youth Development Center (NFYDC), formerly known as the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys. The findings in the report and some of the observations in your letter merit a response.

When I took office in January 2011, criminal and juvenile justice reform was one of my administration's top priorities. I placed a strong, experienced leader at the head of the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), and asked her to begin a comprehensive review and develop a strategy for reform. Secretary Wansley Walters has met this challenge and has begun implementation of an ambitious and progressive plan for Florida's juvenile justice system. We will conduct a comprehensive review of DJJ programs and facilities, redirect youth into alternative programs where appropriate, and reduce the number of deep-end residential beds. I expect that these steps will result in the strategic closing of facilities that have not maintained the standards DJJ has mandated.

Prior to the issuance of the Civil Rights Division's report, the NFYDC had already been identified by Secretary Walters for potential restructuring or closure based on poor performance and high costs. In fact, many of the findings in your report were consistent with Secretary Walters' concerns that were the basis for her decision to close NFYDC.

I note that the findings of the report were confined to issues within the NFYDC, and that the investigation did not include visits to any other facility. Your letter,

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however, indicates that you "suspect" that these issues "affect the entire juvenile justice system statewide." We respectfully, but firmly disagree with the unsupported suggestion that the issues identified in the report are systemic throughout DJJ. The issues investigated by your office were confined to the closed facility, and do not constitute a sufficient, sound, or fair basis for concluding that an entire State agency and its employees are failing to properly administer the juvenile justice system in Florida. Nonetheless, my administration remains committed to review and reform, and Secretary Walters is continuing with her statewide efforts to ensure that no other facilities have failed to follow department policies, that all staff have received training and will continue to receive refresher training, and that systems are in place for reporting and responding to any violations of policy.

Please know that DJJ has taken, and will continue to take, swift and appropriate action to address any conduct that violates laws, policies, or the safety and dignity of the youth in the agency's care. Thank you for the attention of the Civil Rights Division to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rick Scott
Governor